

## FORWARD

The Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program is authorized, regulated, and funded by the federal Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement. The Refugee Resettlement Program is a humanitarian program designed to foster and support the earliest possible economic self-sufficiency for refugees and their families.

The Governor designated the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) as the state agency responsible for the coordination, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program. The VDSS Commissioner delegated these responsibilities to the Director of the Office of Newcomer Services (ONS). ONS is in the Division of Community and Volunteer Services. The ONS Director is also the Virginia State Refugee Coordinator who is designated by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement to serve as the liaison between the federal funding agencies and the local service delivery agencies.

Refugee populations served through the Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program include: refugees, asylees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, victims of human trafficking, Afghans and Iraqis with special immigrant visas, certain Amerasians, and unaccompanied refugee minors.

Refugee services provided through the Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program are 100 percent federally funded. Funding is authorized by Congress and is provided through federal grant awards. The federal grants provide funding for refugee cash assistance, refugee medical assistance, refugee employment services, English language training, refugee medical screenings, and therapeutic foster care for unaccompanied refugee minors. Virginia currently has two discretionary funding awards for services to school aged children and for a Cuban citizenship initiative.

The *Virginia Refugee Resettlement Program Manual* provides guidance to the staffs of ONS-funded agencies that provide services to refugee populations.

The State Refugee Coordinator oversees the delivery of federally funded refugee services and facilitates collaboration among community public and private agencies. Successful resettlement, which is defined as non-reliance on public assistance and integration into community, is accomplished only through effective communication among refugee resettlement providers, local departments of social services, local health districts, local school divisions, individual and community volunteers, and other community partners.